

NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

December 3, 2007

The National Education Committee consisted of myself as the member from Atlantic, Michel Caron from Quebec, Edie Leger from Ontario, and Shelley Mackintosh from the West. Marilyn Adlam, the Ontario Regional VP was our advisor, and also facilitated. We met in February, 2007 for four days to get the "UPCE – You and Your Union" course organized.

After going over the evaluations from the previous National course, it had been determined that what the members wanted was a basic course and a more extensive Grievance Handling course. As the "UPCE – You and Your Union" course was designed as a basic union training course, it was decided to incorporate both into one course over three and half days, with the emphasis on Grievance Handling.

We had 21 participants from across the country attend. There were participants from the Ontario, Western and Atlantic Regions. Unfortunately, there were no interested participants from the Quebec Region. As a result, this was the first time that the National course did not have any requirement for translation. As it turned out, our committee member from Quebec was not able to attend the course due to a change in his working assignment.

The "UPCE – You and Your Union" course was held at the Minto Place Hotel in Ottawa from Tuesday to Friday, May 1 to 4, 2007. Travel days were Monday, April 30 and participants returned home on Friday, May 4 after the course.

The accommodations were quite nice. Our meeting room was large and comfortable and break out rooms were close by and suited our needs. After some discussion and looking at the previous courses, it was decided to have breakfasts and lunches together at the hotel. A dining room was set up for our group exclusively. It was the general consensus that the meals were very good, though there was quite a lot of food. We decided this year to let the participants go on their own for suppers. This seemed to work out well, as groups got together and went shopping, sight seeing, etc. On the day of arrival, participants registered and that evening there was a "Meet and Greet". On the last evening there, we all got together for supper and a great time was had by all. The participants' rooms were clean and comfortable.

The hotel staff was extremely accommodating. They were always willing to help us out and make any changes that were needed. I am sure the committee as a whole would have no problem recommending this facility for another course in the future.

The first day of the course was spent going over the basics of History, Structure, Health and Safety, Human Rights/Harassment and Contract Interpretation with an interactive workshop or activity, i.e, History timeline, being included in all modules. Days two and three were spent on Grievance Handling, which included all aspects of grievances. One of the things mentioned in the previous evaluations was that they would like more time spent on how to

write up an actual grievance, so that was incorporated in the course this time. The fourth day we wrapped up with some discussion on Collective Bargaining, some open discussion with all the participants, the presentation of certificates where one of the participants presented another with their certificate after they said a few kind words about that person and finally, good-byes.

We were fortunate to have both our National President and the Atlantic Regional VP present for some of the course. Both of them took some time and addressed the participants. On the last day we were also very fortunate to have Amanda Mayer and Jamie Kass, the Child Care coordinators at the course as our guest speakers. They spent approximately 30 minutes giving their presentation, and taking questions from the participants.

Right from the start we knew we had a great group of participants. There was great debate and interaction on many subjects, everyone was very respectful of each other and their views, whether they were in agreement or not, everyone participated in the discussion, and there was little or no negativity among the group. We had a mixture of participants, from the very grass root members to some who have more experience working with their locals and regions. Everyone benefited from hearing about the experiences of each other. The atmosphere, in general, for both the facilitators and participants was very relaxed, honest, respectful, and fun.

The evaluations from the participants at the end of the course were very positive and encouraging to the facilitators. The general concensus was that the course was very informative, the material was well organized and very well presented, the interaction of the workshops and role plays were pertinent to the learning process, networks were formed, friendships were started, and they all looked forward to attending another course. Following are some of the comments that we received on the evaluations

“This course was phenomenal, the facilitators were amazing. I feel that this course should be the template for the future”

“Every UPCE member should take this course. It would be an eye opener and promote mobilization.”

“Great Job”

“Highlights- too many to mention”

These sentiments were also repeated in numerous emails sent to the committee once everyone had returned home. I must admit that had never happened in any of the previous courses in which I facilitated.

There were no real negative comments from anyone. Some participants would like more time spent on grievance writing. The suggestion was made to go through writing up a couple of grievances first and go over them as a group before the participants attempted to write up a grievance themselves. A number of participants would like more time spent on Contract Interpretation, and a few suggested having a course dedicated to that subject. These suggestions may be something the Committee wants to consider for the next course.

This is the fourth time that I have been a facilitator and member of the National Education Committee. This was, without a doubt, the best course that I had the honour and pleasure of taking part in. It is difficult to point out any one thing. The group was very interactive, and complemented each other. The atmosphere was very relaxed and favorable to learning, the discussion was open, informative and respectful, and for the most part, things ran on time. The Committee felt very assured that these participants went back to their locals feeling knowledgeable and confident in carrying out their roles as union representatives.

As chairperson of the committee, I have to thank my fellow sisters and committee members, Edie Leger, Shelley Mackintosh and Marilyn Adlam, who was also our advisor, for all their patience, help, hard work and camaraderie. We all worked well together, and our strengths and weaknesses complemented each other. They were a great group to work with and I would be honoured and privileged to work with any and all of them at any time in the future. Thank you so much for the opportunity. Thank you also to Michel Caron for his hard work while he was with the committee.

A special thank you to our National President, Richard DesLauriers, and the National Executive for giving us the time and tools needed to make this course a success. Thank you also to sisters Lyne Cabana, Monique Trahan and France Beaudin-Logan for all their patience, hard work and perseverance in getting all the supplies and information together for us for the binders and handouts. Their expertise was invaluable.

In closing I would like to say that this was a wonderful experience, and all the help that I received from everyone involved made my position as chairperson very easy. Once again thanks to all. I am confident that the participants are now working hard, better prepared to face management in the everyday running of their locals. I am also confident that we can repeat what we accomplished in the 2007 "UPCE – You and Your Union" course again in the future.

Respectfully submitted
In Solidarity

Marina Lee Anstey
Chairperson, National Education Committee